EID MUBARAK!

THE MUSLIM VOICE

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Islamic Movements and the West

Coexistence or Confrontation?

By Faisal Kutty

"Whenever religious energy is thus suppressed, it builds up and ultimately erupts either in isolated acts of struggle or resistance, which are called terrorist by those in power, or in a revolution." (Hassan Turabi, "Principles of Governance, Freedom, and Responsibility in Islam" 4:1 *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*)

Hassan Turabi continues that on the other hand when Islam is allowed free expression, it will bring about social change peacefully and gradually. He notes that religion is based on sincere conviction and voluntary compliance, therefore, an Islamic state cannot be imposed on a reluctant society.

In essence, therefore, an Islamic state can only be created through the will of the people. Turabi, one of the prime architects of the resurgence of Islam emanating from the urban centres of Turkey to the rural hinterlands of Xinjiang (China), claims that Islamists will create a civil society if given the chance.

Can Islamists be trusted and what is the alternative? Are Islamists out to destroy democracy, freedom, justice and liberty? What are the consequences of the lack of communication between the proponents of Islamic revival and the West?

These and other questions must be tackled in order to ensure that the policies formulated to deal with this development in the Muslim world are in keeping with the long term interest of international stability and the right to self-determination.

Many Muslims see the Islamic reawakening as a reassertion of their identity and a return to their roots, an alternative to secular materialism. The West perceives it as a threat -- the so called "Islamic threat."

This fear is compounded by the fact that since the demise of Communism, Islam appears to be the only alternative system capable of transcending ethnic and national barriers.

The fire is further fanned by the alarmist writings and speeches of some scholars -- with perhaps Harvard professor Samuel Huntington as a prime culprit -- journalists and leaders in the West and the Muslim world. The reprehensible actions and anti-West hyperbole and rhetoric spouted by some Islamists does not help the situation.

The Western obsession with a perceived threat of Islamic fundamentalism and the undertaking to combat it at any cost has led many to forget that secular liberalism is only a world view -- not the only one.

The assumption of liberal secularists that all human beings by nature possess the capacity and desire to become liberals when free to do so, and the imposition of this view on others only leads secularists to commit a variation of the very crime they accuse Islamists of; what can be called "secular fundamentalism." (See Peter O'Brien, "Islam vs. Liberalism in Europe" 10:3 *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 367 at 379.)

The Western aversion to Islamists and their wholesale branding as fundamentalists, terrorists and as being inherently anti-Western is inaccurate, and more importantly counterproductive. As John Esposito writes "[t]o equate Islam and Islamic fundamentalism uncritically with extremism is to judge Islam by those who wreak havoc -- a standard not applied to Judaism and Christianity."

Such a characterization and the corollary lack of dialogue is in fact diverting support and legitimacy toward the extremists (See John L. Esposito, "Political Islam: Beyond the Green Menace" *Current History* (January 1994) 19 at 24.)

The Islamic movement, like any other, has its share of radicals but most seek peaceful and democratic change. Shaikh Rached Ghannouchi, the exiled leader of the Tunisian Islamist party *Hizb an Nahda* (The Renaissance Party), sentenced to death in absentia for his democratic opposition, contends that Islamists seek a reformation of their societies, and are committed to social justice, human rights, pluralism and an end to dic-

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Imran Khan Speaks

In Pakistan We Have Selective Islam

Recently Imran Khan received substantial coverage in international media for his views about Islam. For those of you who don't know, Imran Khan is one of the legends of cricket: a fast bowling all-rounder and highly successful captain of the Pakistan team. He is arguably the most popular Pakistani alive. The following was written by him for a pakistani newspaper, Dawn.

By Imran Khan

My generation grew up at a time when the colonial hang up was at its peak. Our older generation had been slaves and had a huge inferiority complex of the British. The school I went to was similar to all the elite schools in Pakistan, despite becoming independent, they were, and still are, producing replicas of English public school boys rather than Pakistanis.

I read Shakespeare which was fine, but no Iqbal. The Islamic class was not considered to be serious, and when I left the school I considered myself amongst the elite of the country because I could speak in English and wore western clothes. Despite periodically shouting Pakistan Zindabad at school functions, I considered my own culture backward and Islam an outdated religion. Amongst our group if any one talked about religion, prayed or kept a beard he was immediately branded a Mullah. Because of the power of the western media, all our heroes were western movie or pop stars.

Oxford and Religion

When I went to Oxford already burdened with this hang up from my school days, things didn't get any easier. In the University not just Islam but all religions were considered anachronism. Science had replaced religion and if something couldn't be logically proved it did not exist. All supernatural stuff was confined to the movies. Philosophers like Darwin who with his half baked theory of evolution was supposed to have disproved the creation of man and hence, religion.

Moreover, European history had an awful experience with religion. The horrors committed by the Christian clergy in the name of God during the Inquisition had left a powerful impact on the western mind. To understand why the West is so keen on secularism, one should go to places like Cordoba in Spain and see the torture apparatus used during the Spanish Inquisition. Also the persecution of scientists as heretics by the clergy had convinced the Europeans that all religions are regressive.

However, the biggest factor that drove people like me away from religion was the selective Islam practised by most of its preachers. In other words, there was a huge difference between what they practised and what they preached. Also, rather than explaining the philosophy behind the religion, there was an over emphasis on rituals.

I feel that humans are different from animals, whereas the latter can be drilled, humans need to be intellectually convinced. That is why the Quran constantly appeals to reason. The worst of course, was the exploitation of Islam for political gains by various individuals or groups.

Hence, it was a miracle I did not become an atheist. The only reason why I did not was the powerful religious influence wielded by my mother on me since my childhood. It was not so much out of conviction but love for her that I stayed a Muslim. However, my Islam was selective, i.e. I accepted only parts of the religion that suited me. Prayers were restricted to Eid days and occasionally on Fridays, when my father insisted on taking me with him.

Brown Sahib (the colonial mentality)

If there was a God I was not sure about it and certainly felt that he did not interfere with my life. All in all I was smoothly moving to becoming a Pukka Brown Sahib. [*"Lets a moment: brown outside, white inside" in terms of mentality - Ed.*]

After all I had the right credentials in terms of the right school, university and above all, acceptability in the English aristocracy, something that our brown sahibs would give their lives for. So what led me to do a *lota* (complete reversal) on the Brown Sahib culture and instead become a desi?

Well it did not just happen overnight. Firstly, the in-

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The Muslim Voice is a non profit publication that seeks to present Islamic and Muslim perspectives on pertinent issues of particular concern to students. The majority of the articles are written by and for university students.

Your comments, suggestions, and any financial contribution would be greatly appreciated. May Allah reward you for contributing to the distribution of Islamic material.

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Islamic Movements: Confrontation or Coexistence?
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tutorships

He and many other Islamists point out that their movement, rather than a fundamentalist one, is more akin to the European Renaissance in a Muslim context. (See Rached Ghannouchi, "Islam and the West Realities and Potentialities" in Ahmed Bin Yousef and Ahmad Abulfobian, eds., *The Politics of Islamic Resurgence Through Western Eyes*, 1992 p 45 at 48)

Far from being monolithic, the movement is composed of divergent groups ranging from the rejectionist and extremist minority to the mainstream which is committed to work peacefully within the existing order

There are significant differences between them, including their visions of an Islamic state and the routes to achieve it. The mainstream seeks Islamization through education, and social and political activism While the former believe in violent overthrow of the existing leadership at any cost But even among these latter groups there is discord.

For instance, in Egypt, the two groups on the fringe, *Al-Gama al Islamiyya* (Islamic Group) and Islamic Jihad, differ over tactics, compete for funding and even have an ongoing rivalry. (See Caryle Murphy, "Egypt An Uneasy Portent of Change" *Current History* (February 1994) 78 at 79)

The only common denominators between the various groups are their identification with Islam, and opposition to the secular elites who have very little, if any, legitimacy in the eyes of a growing number in the Muslim world. Islamic thinkers realize it will not be possible to create the society they wish without going through some birth pangs

Indeed, they point out that the transformation of the Western world into civil societies were brought about not only through intellectual but also bloody political revolutions Why are stricter standards applied to the Muslim world?

Application of the Shari'ah

Ismail and Lamya Faruqi wrote, "Islamic law made Islamic civilization, not vice versa."

This fact explains why the focus of the Islamic movement has been on implementing the *Shari'ah* in all spheres of life. This call evokes three reactions from contemporary thinkers and policy makers in the West and in the Muslim world, ranging from outright opposition to its approval as a viable alternative. (See Ismail Faruqi and Lamya Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam, 1986* at 279.)

> ***Ismail and Lamya Faruqi wrote, "Islamic law made Islamic civilization, not vice versa."***

In their view, if at all applicable in the Islamic context, its application would be restricted to the ultra-conservatives and extremists who, in the words of the late Ismail Faruqi, naively believe that Islamic laws have been fully evolved and "the methodology was absolutely adequate and that the problem of the Muslim World was merely one of human reluctance to realize the values of Islam."(see Ismail Faruqi, "Islamization of Knowledge: Problems, Principles and Prospective" in *Islamic Source and Purpose of Knowledge* at p 34)

It is ironic that the term is used to refer to Islamic revival movements -- many of them led by reformers who wish to reinterpret Islamic law, keeping with the long established Islamic traditions of *tajdid* (renewal) and *islah* (reform)

The third group, including most Islamist leaders and even some western scholars, acknowledge the valuational and conceptual differences between the systems and believe that the Islamic system can be a viable alternative.

Jill Crystal argues, "Islam clearly has values and traditions that are compatible with the kinds of rights protections that the pro-democracy liberals endorse." (See Jill Crystal, "Authoritarianism and its Adversaries in the Arab World" *World Politics* 262 at 286.)

She concludes that equality, respect for the rule of law, respect for private property, social justice, and a tradition of tolerance of debate and argument are established in Islam, though some Islamists today may repudiate this latter principle.

One group believes it is simply a reactionary anti-modern movement waiting to take back civilization to an age of barbarism, the supposed glory days of Islam; a mythical utopia or a way of like with no practical relevance today

These writers, such as Abdullah An-Na'im whose diatribe is featured in numerous legal and international affairs journals, argue that introducing the *Shari'ah* will be disastrous for international relations and human rights.

They overlook the fact that Islamic law was/is created through interpretation, or *Usul al fiqh* (science of jurisprudence), and hence the legal rules (as opposed to the underlying principles) can be reformulated, if needed, to meet the changed modern situations. Islamists and some Western scholars counter that this fear is the legacy of the Crusades and has no basis in reality.

A second group of thinkers classify the return to Islam as fundamentalism. Islamists reject the label insofar as it reflects the negative connotations implied by its modern usage.

Faisal Kutty studied Law at U of Ottawa, and is articling in Toronto. He writes regularly for Islamic publications in North America.

Standing your Ground
Persevering Through Problems

By Sibreen Ahmed

I think I can speak for the majority of people when I say that we all have problems Conflicting commitments, unexpected events, trouble in our relationships with family or friends these are just a few examples from our daily lives.

One of the most important attributes needed to overcome one's problems is perseverance, or *sabr* in Arabic.

****

There are basically three kinds of perseverance that one might consider. 1) perseverance in being obedient and completing acts of worship; 2) perseverance in stopping oneself from wrong actions and being disobedient; and 3) perseverance in the face of destiny so that the servant doesn't become angry in times of adversity.

It is this third kind of perseverance that I will focus on, for this is the type we need, to endure our problems. Without it, even our faith in Islam may be shaken.

A believer is not one whose worship is half-hearted, that feels reassured if something good happens to them, but when afflicted with misfortune he/she turns away from Allah in lost hope, becoming a sure loser. No, indeed the true believer remains constant in their faith through both their good and bad times.

How could they turn away, when Allah gives good news to those who persevere and promises them three things, each of which is far better than anything material in this world.

"And give good news to those who persevere, those who say, when misfortune strikes them, 'Surely we come from Allah, and surely to Him we return'; these are the ones on whom blessings from their Lord descend, and mercy, and these are the ones who are rightly guided." (Qur'an 2:155 - 157)

Another positive aspect of hardship is that one's sins may be forgiven It is reported that Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, related that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "Any believer who is afflicted by a misfortune, even if it is as little as the prick of a thorn, will have it removed from his record of wrong actions, in return for it." (Bukhari & Muslim)

A Believer Must Remember...

However, when faced with any problem, a believer should also remember two things. One is that they should keep in mind that Allah has stated in the Qur'an that no soul will be tested with anything that is greater than they (the individual) can bear. (Qur'an 2:286; 7:42; 23:62)

Secondly, one must consider the use of complaining about their problems to only their brother or sister in Islam, who is incapable of any mercy that will relieve one of one's troubles. We can all learn something from the saying of Prophet Yaqub, peace be on him, when he said, "I only reveal my distress and sorrow to Allah." (Qur'an 12:86)

It is logical that the first being one should turn to when in distress is to their Creator, to ask for mercy. A person's friends, although helpful, offer very little comfort in comparison to this.

It is also interesting to note on this topic that it has been related that Sa'id ibn Juhari said, "Perseverance is the servant's acceptance before Allah of the affliction that He has caused to befall him, his recognition that Allah has taken it into account, and his hope that Allah will reward him for it.

The servant may inwardly be in a state of fright and panic, but by exercising his self-control, nothing but perseverance can be observed in his demeanor."

Overall, perseverance in a time of misfortune offers an opportunity for reaffirming faith, receiving blessings & mercy from Allah, and having one's sins forgiven I think I speak for the majority when I say that is something that we could all benefit from.

Shireen Ahmed studies at the University of Toronto (Erindale), and is actively involved in her MSA.

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The Tyranny of Images

The Medium in Light of the Qur'anic Message

By Abdul-Rehman Malik

It has been said that we live in a world of images. Our reality is shaped by the way it is presented in popular culture and opinion -- through art, music, and the "dreaded" news media. The late Marshall McLuhan, a University of Toronto professor whose theories gained widespread fame in the 1960's and early seventies, tried to see beyond the images and perceptions mass media created for us, and surmised that the only way to make sense of a seemingly chaotic stream of information was to seek the meaning of things in the very medium through which ideas were being disseminated. Thus the "medium was the message."

However, it seems that McLuhan's ideas, although still rather popular in intellectual circles and oft-quoted by media specialists, have failed an impact on society-at-large. Instead of understanding how our reality is shaped by the medium, we have instead fallen prey to and accepted (largely without question), the images presented to us.

Critical thought it seems have to been taken out of this equation -- the medium no longer asks us to think about the images it presents, but asks us to simply react on an emotional level. This in itself is not a bad thing: as individuals, we react to our surrounding in many ways, however contemporary popular culture directs us to react in terms of our desires, likes and dislikes. The whole notion that there is a criterion for evaluating our reality is no longer an idea which holds any weight in popular public perception.

This short examination of the dynamics of popular culture and mass media should not be new to anyone. Rather, it is an oft-mentioned, much discussed phenomenon, especially among Muslims who see this relationship at being at the heart of the deviation and corruption present in western society.

This kind of "critical thinking" is common among Muslims. However, looking over some of the articles *The Muslim Voice* is considering printing in future issues, I discovered a surprising thing. When discussing issues as desparate as politics, the *hijab*, dating, sex or *Salah* we portray Islam in terms of ideals and absolute values.

This is important, since we must understand what the *deen* commands of us and how the Prophet and his companions, both male and female, implemented the *deen*. The surprising thing is that we gloss over the reality of our situation today.

One article I read condemned the "western" fascination with drinking and sex, and said that it was these two things that were at the heart of moral decay on university and college campuses. Fair enough, but when it came to describing the Islamic alternative, the analysis was glowing and positive. In terms of Allah's commands and the Sunnah of the Prophet, we can indeed find the ideal approaches, yet when we see that today more "practicing" Muslims are confused about these very issues, there has to be an expbeit realization that the ideal has not been implemented, that we are incapable of implementing it, or that the ideal needs to be adapted to our situation here for it to be effective.

It is easy to contrast the Islamic ideals with contemporary societal conditions, while it is much harder to actually tackle the reasons why these ideals have not been put into practice, or when they have, the reasons why the have not worked.

The way we address these issues shows us that we as Muslims continue to respond to our situation here in North America on a simple emotional level: we roundly condemn society around us, while praising the Islamic alternatives. Practicably, although addressed, is often relegated to a few short useless statements. This is because cures are much more difficult to describe than diseases (to quote Hamza Yusuf).

The Road Ahead

The road to creating critical thinking begins with training and education. The *tarbiyyah* of the Prophet began with the basics and grew, slowly, from there. The Prophet and his companions were patient in adversity, thoughtful in crisis and sincere in practice -- all qualities which, if developed, would allow us to transcend the images and understand the ideas, ideologies and approaches of the medium.

We as a community are caught up in images, both of the west and of Islam. We are inundated with images thus society creates and our Islam is threatened. And in response, we too create our own images of a utopian Islam, which we hope will be created in the future and which we think exists, in some measure, today.

Islam is perfect, yet our practice of it is weak. We have to understand this and seek refuge in the Qur'anic and Prophetic experience, without losing sight of reality. The Prophet in his time faced grave crises. The righteous Sahaba faced problems, both internal and external, in a time when Islam continued to grow. It is hard for us to imagine, but the community of the Prophet was, within 70 years of his death, being torn apart by factionalism and infighting...yet, Islam flourished.

Allah tells us in the Surah Al-Ankabut (The Spider), verse 67:

"Do they [the people] not see that We have given them a safe sanctuary, while all around them men are being despoiled? Do they then believe what is false, and deny the bounty of God?"

Muhammad Asad in his Message of The Qur'an quotes some commentators saying that, while this *ayah* indicated to the Quraysh that Allah had given them security in Mecca by virtue of the sanctuary of the Ka'ba, the ayah is far more general in describing the situation of Muslims.

While around us the entire world seems chaotic and people are being destroyed and debased, Allah has given us the sanctuary of Islam as a refuge from all kinds of confusion. It is Allah's mercy that he has given us the *deen* -- but it is our choice whether we seek refuge within its confines. If we choose to do so and strive to do so, we will begin to transcend false images and perceptions -- those that are created for us and those we create for ourselves.

We will then be ready to really do work for the sake of Allah, as it should be done. And to think critically about our situation, as we desperately need to do.

May Allah forgive me for my shortcomings and save us from Hellfire. May Allah grant us his mercy and forgiveness, since there is no one who can grant us security and happiness except Allah. And we ask Allah to except our fasting, and overlook our mistakes, help us to correct or character, and protect us from confusion. Ameen.

Abdul-Rehman Malik is the Amir of MSA U of Toronto (St. George). He is studying Political Science and Middle East and Islamic Studies.

IslaMED

Bridging the Gap between Medicine and Islam

By Iqbal Ahmed

Health care issues are faced by every Muslim in their daily lives. Whether it is regarding contraceptive techniques or considering organ donation, every Muslim is confronted with issues pertaining to health care. With the rapidly expanding field of medicine generating new interventions and practises everyday, it is vital that Muslims keep-up-to-date with the Islamic position(s) on these issues.

IslaMED is a new forum to discuss Islamic perspectives on medical and health care issues. Insha'Allah, this forum is open to all interested Muslims, but specific emphasis will be made to include those in the health care field and Islamic scholars. Extensive research will be conducted to ensure that only authentic and quabfied Islamic sources are used.

Among the many objectives of the forum are:

- research, discussion, and presentation of medical and health care issues, particularly those with complex moral and ethical impbcations
- establishment and coordination of Islamic support services for those who are sick, specifically Muslim inpatients
- provide information and support to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine and health care fields
- increased community awareness of local medical and health care practitioners

Insba'Allah, the results of IslaMED's debberations and investigations will be presented to the Muslim pubbc via regular pubbcations and seminars/lectures.

As IslaMED is an open forum, all interested Muslims are asked to become involved in these discussions. Initially, the focus of IslaMED's activity will be locally, i.e. in Toronto and surrounding areas. Please call 416-408-2123 for more information.

May Allah guide us to present all that is true, and disregard that which is false.

The Parable of the Tree

The Believer is like a tree with deep roots

By Faisal Siddiqui

"Seest thou not how Allah sets forth a parable? --
A Goodly Word like a goodly tree,
whose root is firmly fixed, and its
branches (reach) to the Heavens
It brings forth its fruit at all times
by the leave of its Lord.
So Allah sets forth parables for men,
in order that they may receive admonition"
(Qur'an, 14:24-25)

IN a field of plenty, a valley of green, bes alone, a Tree. Its is sublime, its beauty enchanting. It stands as a Candle the Earth, br with the fire of a thousand fruits. Its branches stretch forth towards the heavens, like the hand of the servant who calls upon his Lord. Its expanse commands respect, its height is unattainable. And although it stands silent, its mere sight speaks eternal words.

THE TREE reaches out into bfe. Its branches spread deep against an azure sky, its roots are submerged in all directions of the earth. Its breadth is sweeping, its stature immense. Its presence can be seen from a distance, its influence reaches far and wide.

THE TREE is firmly rooted in the ground. Pushing it is a fruitless endeavor; shaking it is unthinkable. Its strength bes in stability, its might cannot be uprooted. It holds to the earth not with one rope, but with a thousand it is securely fastened.

THE TREE produces fruit from which all enjoy its providence. It arms provide shade for the weary who pass it by. The bird finds it a haven to build its tranquil nest. Mankind eats of its fruits, finding them nourishing and delicious.

THE TREE is faced with the adversity of bfe. In winter it is naked to face the enduring chill. The wind tears its skin, as the rain beats down heavily upon it. Animals accord it no respect and defecate upon its body. Creatures burrow into its bone and rape it at will. Yet it stands silent, firm. And continues to bear the fruit.

THE BELIEVER, like the tree, is beautiful. He is loved by all and his presence is one that is welcomed, cherished. Justice follows his foot steps and truth lurks in his shadows. He commands respect because he aspires for it not in the eyes of men, but in sight of Allah. His height is not one measured in meters, but one of *imaan* and *taqwa*. His beauty bes in his actions and deeds, his words and thoughts. He stands silent, yet his presence speaks endless words.

THE BELIEVER, like the tree, reaches out into bfe. He is involved in it, shaping its horizon, cultivating its landscape. He branches out into all its spheres, its realms, and his presence is like the star that guides the seafarer. His stature is immense because wherever he may be he stands for Allah, for God-consciousness, for righteousness, and for equality. The fruits of the tree are far reaching as man may sell them and spread their bounty. The believer, too, has a presence that is felt far and wide, for his actions produce goodness wherever they or their repercussions are felt.

THE BELIEVER, like the tree, is firmly rooted. His trust in Allah cannot be shaken, nor his conscience breached. He is not subjected to weak forces of *kufr*, but remains stable and firm in their onslaught. He is immovable, impervious, for he stands for what Allah and His Messenger espouse. Like the tree, he is securely fastened to his Islam. His roots are not one but many; for they are the roots of Knowledge. His branches are the Branches of Faith.

THE BELIEVER, like the tree,

(Continued on page 4)

Stranger in a Strange Land

My Journey into the Sudan

By Sister Valerie Zimmerman

Although Sudan is occasionally in the news these days, when I tell people that I lived there, most of them shyly ask, "And just where is that?" This is actually somewhat reassuring, as it suggests the typically hostile press is not receiving much attention.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa, about one-fourth the size of the United States. It is just south of Egypt and borders on the Red Sea, with Port Sudan less than 200 miles from Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.

Its location, combined with its historical occupation by Egyptian and Turkish forces, has allowed it to acquire a phenotypically diverse population, that religiously is very contradictory to what the West likes to portray as "Northern Arab Muslims and Southern Black Christians."

Divisions

This division was, indeed, the goal of the British colonizers, who enforced two separate laws (the *British Passports and Permits Ordinance* of 1922 and the *Closed Districts Ordinance* of 1933) that not only prohibited travel to the South, but forbade the use of Arabic, Islamic education, and even wearing clothing that looked Arabic south of their colonialist line.

In spite of the fact that in Khartoum, Sudan's capital, countless Muslims with black skin can be seen answering the call to prayer each day, and Arabs can be seen leaving their churches after Sunday services the women sporting Western clothes and hairstyles--the lay and even professional press still try to keep the Arab-Muslim/Black Christian confrontation image alive.

For example, a recent article published in the *Annals of Tropical Medicine and Parasitology* (Mamell et al, 1992, Vol 86, Page 387), claimed that "long standing cultural polarity" has created this Arab north and southern black Sudan.

These Irish researchers were reporting results of parasite screening among the displaced in Juba, once a major city in the south, not far from the border with Kenya. The authors even implied that being black and Muslim are mutually exclusive, by saying " the north of the country is primarily Arab and the south black African. Consequently, most of the sample population in this study are Christian, only 12% are Muslim."

Juba Twice

I have been to Juba twice, once for a month starting in December 1993, and six weeks later during the first week of Ramadan (1414 AH, 1994). Juba was occupied by rebels in 1992 and Garang has a history of attacking relief planes, so caution is still exercised in the approach to the Juba airport. Planes maintain cruising altitude until almost over the airport, and then basically dive in for a landing.

Although our party was fairly well received by the people, we did encounter a reluctance by some to participate in the clinical trial we were organizing. This was a response to experience with what I call the widespread academic rape of the Third World where data is obtained, names appear on publications, CVs become fatter, and the researchers go on to their next village while the health problems go on as usual in their wake.

Beliefs

In addition to Christians and Muslims, southern Sudan has animists or adherents of traditional African beliefs. In many cases there were no external indications of religious preference, although many Christians wear puns bearing pictures of a revered saint.

I do not know if the topless, pipe-smoking women who occupied their time stirring home brew in 50 gallon drums perched on rocks over particularly foul smelling fires were of the animist faith or belonged to the group that the local Christians claimed had no religion.

Whenever appropriate, I relayed the fact that several Christian churches in America are now saying that God allows homosexuality. This was shocking to most people, but interestingly, some of the Christians responded that then tribal leaders would never allow such behavior, without making reference to a religious premise for forbidding such perversion.

As Christian missionaries in the West of Africa work to pry Muslims who have 'little understanding of Islam' away from their faith (*The Lutheran*, July, 1993, p. 26), I pray that all people insha'Allah will be guided to the comprehensive truth of Islam, including the people in the south of Sudan.

The Effects of War

One truth that more and more southerners are finally realizing is that the strife to which they have been subjected is the work of outsiders who are their enemies, not their friends.

In Khartoum countless Muslims with black skin can be seen answering the call to prayer each day, and Arabs can be seen leaving their churches after Sunday services belying the Arab-Muslim/Black Christian confrontation image.

One of the physicians in our group asked the children where their fathers were and as might be expected in an area besieged by war, a large proportion had none. But many of these children Christian children - said they had no fathers because John Garang had kidnapped them to force them to fight in his rebel band.

More alarming are the reports that he has also kidnapped up to 20,000 children for the same purpose. In discussing with southern Christians their status as pawns, I exhorted them to remember that the enemies of Islam also do not like people with black skin.

On a journey to a village a short distance from Juba, we frequently had to detour around craters in the dirt road left from exploded land mines. Many live mines still remain off the roads. Back in the camps, dirt houses have been abandoned because they have no roofs. The green plastic sheets previously available from the aid agencies were essentially impossible to acquire when I was there. And the thatch traditionally used in roofing, gathered by women in the fields surrounding the town, is almost as unavailable.

At that time, the amount of thatch needed for a one room dirt hut cost the equivalent of $65 -- wages gained in return for risking one's life in the mine fields. To put that in perspective, one of the MDs in our group received about $20 a month during his pediatrics residency.

Mujadhideen

In addition having the opportunity to talk to many of the local people, permanent residents and displaced alike, I was privileged Al-hamdulillah to meet many of the mujahideen.

The mujahideen in Sudan are not just soldiers. There are men and women who go to the south to teach Islam. There are engineers... there are doctors...

The mujahideen in Sudan are not just soldiers. There are men and women who go to the south to teach Islam. There are engineers, whose tasks include rebuilding the bridges Garang blew up.

There are doctors, living in villages while they attend to all the needs of the villagers by building schools, making "house calls," and trying to repair the damage that has been done. Men of all professions are volunteering for *jihad fisabilillah* and to help ensure their homeland can consume in its course towards Islamic freedom.

Doctors are also soldiers. Men of all ages volunteer to make jihad with no thoughts of dunya. One young doctor, like many, did not live to practice his vocation. After he was shot, he managed to turn toward the Qibla and make sujud, in which position he died.

A prominent surgeon, Dr. Awat Omer, refused to leave jihad.

Determination

Masha'Allah, he was fierce in his dedication. Not waiting for those who could make it back to the hospital, he insisted on being at the front line. His ability masha'Allah to perform surgery in the field with essentially no post-operation infection was Alhamdulillah incredible.

When I met Dr. Omer in Juba on my second trip, during Ramadan, he had just returned after being hospitalized several months for treatment of his own wounds. Now that he was able, he was heading back to the front. I told him of my plans insha'Allah to share what is going on in Sudan with everyone in America.

Then he told me Insha'Allah next time he was in Khartoum he would give me as many films as I wanted to take with me. Subhan Allah, five days later Dr. Omer was *shaheed*. The rest of the mujahideen are Alhamdulillah as sincere in their *jihad* as Dr. Omer.

During my part of my trip to Juba, I rode in the cockpit of an old Boeing 727 converted to a cargo plane. On other flights I rode in the cargo area with the soldiers, who sat scattered about on sacks of flour or boxes of ammunition, carefully cradling their rifles as they read their Qur'ans in the dim light of the windowless fuselage. I couldn't help but be reminded of the soldiers that the U.S. sent to Vietnam and the contrast in motivation and intentions.

External Pressure and Internal Strength

The outside pressure to keep Sudan in war is intended to have predictable multiple effects on the government. One is to keep Sudan an SILIC, or Severely Indebted Low Income Country (the bottom of the ratings categories, as one might expect).

These debts were inherited by the current government, and reflect the fact that debts didn't start being tallied until the direction of exchange stopped being from South to North and went to North to South. I think it's about time Third World Countries put a pen to what the North owes the South for exploited resources, which should immediately relieve any indebtedness.

Another solution, proposed by the previous Secretary-General of the United Nations, would be to totally forgive the bilateral debt burden of Sub-Saharan Africa. The Swedish International Development Authority, in support of this proposal, claimed this would be less costly to industrialized nations than the politically motivated restructuring of selected countries' debts undertaken by the Paris Club.

The current government of Sudan is committed to building the country from within, while debate and criticism continue among the "World Powers" (*la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*). Sudan aims, Insha'Allah, to develop the full potential of its vast resources in a way that can benefit not only Sudan but other developing countries as well.

Sudan takes a stand

It is taking a stand, letting the gibes of its opponents roll off as it works towards an Insha'Allah indomitable, truly Islamic society. Some people in Sudan may criticize certain actions that have been taken or may not like someone who is in some official position, but this does not detract from the overwhelming commitment to establishing an Islamic state.

This commitment Insha'Allah will endure, a premise supported by the fact that the Islamic party easily won the student elections at the University of Khartoum.

Insha'Allah the Muslim world will keep up with what is happening in Sudan and will support those who are working to make it a success.

I wish the Muslims from every masjid in North America would make cassettes for the mujahideen, saying *Assalamu'alaikum* and extending their support.

Please keep Sudan's leaders and people in your *du`a*, and may we all be guided to the path which is straight.

Valerie Zimmerman is an American Muslimah who lives in Sudan.

The Parable of the Tree

(Continued from page 3)

produces innumerable fruits. He is one from whom everyone benefits, Muslim and non-Muslim, man and animal. And as the tree provides shade, he provides shade for those who seek his help. In his heart he nests strength and love for his brothers. Like the tree he gives selflessly, never expecting return or compensation. His fruits are rewarding and just as delicious.

THE BELIEVER, like the tree, is faced with the adversities of life-- yet he rises above. He experiences the pressures of life, the loss of love, the pain of suffering. However he remains silent and firm. And despite the situation he always bears fruit. He turns to his Lord and to no other source; he finds comfort in Allah, despite the hardship. His sacrifice is unannounced, his resolve internal. And the strength he receives from Allah allows him to be fruitful in his endeavors and his jihads.

This is the parable of the Tree to the Believer. *Wallahu A'lam.* (And Allah knows best)

"Remember: The Prophet (PBUH) didn't have access to e-mail."

Iqbal Ahmed's reminder to Faraz Rabbani and other e-mail addicts. Thursday, February 23, 1995.

DATELINE: Sudan

First Impressions of an "Islamic State"

By Amina Saeed
with Altaf Kaiseruddin, & Irfan Lateef

We were nine Muslims from different parts of America, many of whom had never met each other Curiosity about the Sudan had brought us together and persuaded each of us to spend our semester breaks with strangers.

Finally, after a few rushed weeks of preparation, we met at London's Heathrow airport When we got to London, the three of us from Chicago worried about how we would recognize the others without knowing what they looked like After we eventually located everyone and exchanged ideas of what we all expected, we realized that we really had no idea of what was in store for us.

However, our expectations were high, based on all the reports we had heard and read about the Islamic movement in the Sudan, and we looked forward to an adventurous two weeks.

Check-In

At the Sudan Airways check-in desk, while the brothers were getting our boarding passes, I looked around at our fellow passengers, eager for my first impression of the Sudanese "These people can't be going to Sudan," I thought, "the women aren't wearing Hijab!" Nevertheless, as we boarded the plane we knew something was different when the captain started the trip with a du'a. Six hours later, moreover, while the plane descended to Khartoum, many of the previously uncovered women suddenly adorned Hijabs. This keyed us all off to the new environment we were about to enter.

Even though it was three in the morning, we received a warm welcome. We were relieved to find our hosts waiting for us as we stepped off the plane. After having traveled half way across the world with hardly any details, we were, you could say, just slightly worried We were greeted by the President and other officers of the General Sudanese Students' Union (GSSU). The GSSU, the governing body of students in higher education, had invited us to participate in the upcoming Independence day celebrations and to see the Sudan.

We were immediately driven to a private lounge where other members of the GSSU were waiting for us. They collected our passports and baggage claim checks from us while we wondered whether we should be handing over our passports to strangers, even though they were our Muslim brothers. As everyone gathered around, the Secretary of the National Assembly, who looked quite majestic in his sparkling white gilabiya, turban, and with the traditional Sudanese wooden cane in hand, joined us Finally, it seemed like we were to find out more about our trip.

As we introduced ourselves, he asked us about the size of our respective families When I said that I have two siblings, he shook his head in disapproval. Unfortunately, Muslims who live in the west have been indoctrinated with the concept of a nuclear family, he said, and have forgotten that Muslims should have large families. Later, we were to learn that most Sudanese come from large families

In clear English, he proceeded to tell us just a little about what to expect in the days to come, before allowing us to ask questions "Yes," he said, we would be meeting with Sheikh Hasan al-Turabi and General Bashir, Insha'Allah. Of course we were all ecstatic when we heard that

Human Rights

Someone asked a question about the reports of alleged human rights abuse, to which the Secretary gave a response well worth sharing He took a blank white sheet of paper and drew a dot at the very center of it. He held it up and asked us what we saw Naturally, everyone said they saw a dot. That, he said, was our mistake. Before he drew the dot, we had seen a blank sheet of paper, but as soon as the dot appeared, all attention was focused on that. He used this analogy to explain that the allegations of human rights abuse are over emphasized. Sudan cannot deny that human rights violations occur, just as they do in every other country How ever, it is unfair to ignore all the positive aspects of the Sudan and focus in on a dark spot, as we had done with the dot. Thus, ended our first meeting in the Sudan

Khartoum

After Fajr, as the van drove away from the airport, we found Khartoum awakening to face the final day of 1994 At that moment though, after being subjected to three different time zones within a span of twenty four hours, 1994 had lost all significance for me

We were in a Muslim nation now, and the year was 1415 (A. H.), 1994 having been left far behind in other time zones

The Sudanese are very proud of the progress they have made in attempting to establish an Islamic State A lot of this pride was manifest during the Independence celebration, the first event we attended. It was a military celebration with General Bashir and President Saleh of Yemen attending.

On the whole, the experience was exhilarating. "Even if we can capture a tenth of this energy and exuberance in North America," we surmised, "we will have a much stronger Ummah, *Insha'Allah*."

Fighting Women

As the military and Public Defense regiments began assembling however, we all noticed something very peculiar regiments of women in military uniform, with hijab, holding AK-47s One brother said, "That really makes you feel hard core!" It was strange at first, but also encouraging to see such a show of strength

Later though, we all were shocked to see these same women running, jumping, shooting and crawling through small tunnels in an exposition of their talents It was one thing to see them march by, but to have them do drills in front of 100,000 people was in our minds incomprehensible and unnecessary It was encouraging to see that sisters were receiving military training, but why was it necessary for them to display their talents in public?

* * * * * * * * * *

These are just a few glimpses of what was, a very eventful trip The Sudan seems worlds away now, as I sit before a computer screen back home in the United States Yet, the people we met, the friendships we made, the emotions we felt, and the places we saw will continue to remain a part of our lives, *Insha'Allah*

We hope to share more of our experiences and perceptions of life in the Sudan with you such as the role of women in the Sudan, the educational system, the war, etc in upcoming issues of the TMV, Insha'Allah

Islam, Democracy, the State and the West: A Round Table with Dr. Hasan Turabi

A Book Review

By Taras Hollyer

With the rise of Islam in Bosnia, the former Soviet Union, the Middle and Far East, Western Europe and North America, a noticeable increase in media coverage of Islam and Muslims has come about

Unfortunately, the coverage has not sought to understand Islam and Muslims. Rather, the media has sought to manufacture a simplified cartoon of what a Muslim is, often with a prejudiced slant For example, the cartoon Muslim known as 'fundamentalist' has been routinely paraded as the typical Muslim, in response to the rise of Islamic movements around the globe On a global scale, the Islamic movement in Sudan has received a fair bit of negative coverage by both the media and Western 'experts' using this very approach

Dr. Hasan Turabi

Any student of post-1970 Sudan will tell you that in order to understand where the country is heading, you have to understand the Islamic Movement in Sudan. In order to do this, you must study the thought of one man: Dr. Hasan Turabi

Dr. Turabi was born in 1932 in the eastern Sudanese city of Kassala to a family well-known for its Islamic scholarship. After completing a Law degree at the University of Khartoum, Dr. Turabi continued his studies in London, and later obtained his PhD at the Sorbonne in Paris. Dr. Turabi then returned to Sudan, where he served in a variety of academic and governmental positions. Being an influential Islamist, he was routinely imprisoned by successive anti-Islamist regimes As head of the National Islamic Front, he joined the government of Sadiq al-Mahdi as Attorney General and later as Minister of Foreign Affairs The Islamization of Sudan was largely brought about by the efforts of Dr. Turabi and his movement.

The Book

Recently, a monograph entitled *Islam, Democracy, the State and the West: A round-table with Dr. Hasan Turabi* was published by WISE (World and Islam Studies Enterprise), a Florida-based institute for the study of political, social and economic issues facing Muslims. The format of the monograph is quite simple it is a transcript of a round-table discussion that occurred in 1992 between Dr. Turabi and some of America's leading 'Middle East experts', most notably John Esposito and John Voll

In this discussion, Dr Turabi outlines the relationship between government and Islam in Muslim society In doing so, he begins by emphasizing the unity of Islamic thought and the consequences of this in daily life. He explains clearly why there is no separation between 'Church' and 'State' in Islam

Dr. Turabi is forced to explain in detail Islamic responses to common questions posed by non-Muslims about the Islamic State, and he does so with eloquence.

Furthermore, he dispels the stigma attached to the unification of religion and public life, commonly denounced by secularists as theocracy Dr Turabi provides practical examples to bolster his point.

The presentation by Dr Turabi is actually quite brief. The bulk of the monograph is dedicated to a Question and Answer period This is the most interesting part of the book, since Dr. Turabi is forced to explain in detail Islamic responses to common questions posed by non-Muslims about the Islamic State, and he does so with eloquence

As a whole, the book provides a fascinating look into the minds of one of the world's most successful and controversial, Muslim intellectuals Apart from occasional typos, the text is clearly presented and easy to read.

In providing the chance for leading American intellectuals to talk with Dr Turabi, a greater, more positive understanding of Islamic movements was achieved It also puts into action one of the most under-implemented responses Muslims use in the face of bad press: "Why don't they just ask us?"

Taras Hollyer is a PhD student at the University of Toronto, and is studying Toxicology.

Relfections on Giving

By Wael Haddara

I looked upon the clear blue sky,
And saw the Sun in all her glory
She smiled in radiance, and I smiled back,
Basking gently in her warmth.
I looked upon the dark grey sky,
And saw the tears in the clouds' eyes
I smiled again, because from her tears,
The Earth shone forth in bright green beauty
So, in this life the world takes comfort
In the smiles of a few brave souls
But when they cry, the world gains more,
For in their tears, the world finds strength,
And grows in stature, as the green earth does
It is their fate to be
The Sun that Shines,
And the Clouds that Weep.
It is their fate to give,
and ours to receive

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Muslim College Life

Dating, Drinking and Deen

By Huma Ahmad

Freedom...

Students live for the day when they can move out of the house, go to college and finally be free. Freedom from their parents, restrictions on their lifestyle, and everyone telling them what to do.

This is why, in college, you find a whole generation that does what they want. "Life is short," they say, "Let's enjoy ourselves while we can." So it goes for Muslims too. In college, you find the most amazing things.

There are Muslims who do not pray, Muslims who date, and Muslims who attend MSA meetings but go out to parties and drink.

Why is this happening?

For one, when students go off to university, they realize that their belief was actually blind faith. Religion becomes like Father Christmas - when they became old enough, they knew better than to believe in it.

Most students have little knowledge about Islam and might only get by with a few rituals. "Why believe something on faith?" they ask. "After all we cannot see Heaven or Hell. How do we know Islam is right anyway?"

Islamic culture to them means marrying someone they never knew. It means never hanging out or having fun. For a Muslim girl, 'Islamic' culture has even less to offer. It would mean double standards or having to serve a husband the rest of her life.

In comparison to this, the western alternative *looks* far more attractive. In western culture 'love and romance' are supposedly everywhere. Everyone is looking for love freely. Meeting someone, going out, and seeking pleasure sounds much better than an arranged marriage.

The Other Side

But what about the downside? For love at first sight, you need the right image, the right hair, the right clothes. Girls have to aspire to be like the latest supermodels. There are also numerous considerations. Who is going out with who? What are my friends thinking? What happens if I don't get the right person? What is my boyfriend or girlfriend thinking?

The result is frustration, desperation, and unhappiness.

The Alternative

Imagine all the heartache youth would save if they followed the *Islamic* alternative. In true Islam, unlike culture, there is no game playing. If two people wish to be involved, they are both straight with one another. Unlike what goes on today amongst some Muslims, they both meet each other and make a contract to marry.

Women are treated with respect. There is no sexual bombardment like there is in western society. Sex in western culture is also often seen as a vice or a sin of the flesh. But in Islam, sex is seen as natural, as long as it is under the right circumstances, when the two are committed to one another in marriage.

The College Way

College drinking is another unfortunate norm. If you do not drink or party, you are considered weird. Drinking is cool and it allows people to socialize and have fun. The one who refrains from this "misses out" and is less of a person.

But in Islam, drinking and all its harms are cut off at the root. So many problems including accidents, pregnancy, violence and even rape are completely avoided.

In this society, and especially in college, success is not seen in terms of religion. It is seen in terms of what other people think, one's career, or how much money one makes. If you are religious you must have failed at life. But why do we have this seperation and this blindness in religion?

A Muslim's Faith: No Blindness

The Qur'an tells us again and again not to have blind faith, not to follow the religion of our forefathers.

Yet we as Muslims have stopped thinking. We may think about what our friends or other people will say, but we avoid thinking about the real issues. We spend so much time thinking about the opposite sex, careers, or the like, but we forget to think about death and how much of this we will actually be able to take with us?

"Every soul shall have a taste of death and only on the Day of Judgement shall you be paid your full recompense. ...for the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception." (Qur'an 3:185)

Shouldn't we take the time to contemplate what will happen to us after we hit the grave? After all, what is the point of life if we are not accountable for our actions? If there is no Creator, what is the point of being honest or good.

If we really look at our life, we see that everything is indefinite whether it is getting a job or even living until tomorrow. We could die at any time. In fact, death is the only certain thing in our life. Most of us believe we can make up for our actions or be religious later. But we are gambling. The chances of our dying today are little, but the stakes are high. Allah (swt) reminds us of the importance of this,

"O you who believe, obey Allah as He should be obeyed, and die not except in a state of Islam." (Qur'an 3:102)

The Decision

Each of us needs to decide: Is Islam right or not? Why don't we take the time, just once, once in our lives to find out if Islam is right. Is the Qur'an from Allah or not? We cannot see Allah (swt), but is there a Maker to all this?

We need to study nature and the world. We only live once. If Islam is wrong, then we should leave it, but if it is right we should not go halfway. We should not drink or go on a date thinking we are not doing anything wrong and then feel guilty about it later as we worry about the Hellfire. On the Day of Judgement it will be us alone who will be asked about our actions.

If Islam is right and we are not following this *deen* completely, we are injuring our own soul in this life and the next.

"Verily We have revealed the Book to thee in truth, for (instructing) mankind. He, then that receives guidance benefits his own soul: but he that strays injures his own soul..." (Qur'an 39: 41)

Depth of Understanding

This is the true definition of freedom -- to learn about Islam and the world openly, to contemplate life and death. And after learning the truth, obeying the word of Allah (swt).

"Those on whom knowledge has been bestowed may learn that this (Qur'an) is the truth from your Lord, and that they believe therein, and their hearts may be made humbly (open) to it..." (Qur'an 22:54)

Once students have this rock solid intellectual belief in Islam, the false, corrupt nature of the people around them as well as the beauty and wisdom of the Islamic way, the best alternative, is clear. What others do is of less importance. Even if others think Muslims are weird to pray or be honest, the Muslims would continue to be that way because they know their *deen*.

The Prophet's oft-repeated admonishments to seek knowledge are far too often forgotten by students. Our Qur'ans are left on the top shelves, gathering dust. Sometimes, the most we read is when someone dies. How is this to help, when the guidance comes too late?

The Qur'an is for the living. The path to understanding and following Islam comes from learning first. How many of us are Muslim, yet have never read the Qur'an in our native language? How many of us have yet to open a book on hadith or sunnah?

How many of us defend Islam to non-Muslims, but do not follow it ourselves?

May Allah (swt) forgive and lead us and all those lost to the straight path, insha'Allah.

Huma Ahmad is a 2nd year CompSci student at SUNY Albany (NY) and is active in her MSA.

Prison Dawah

Dilemma of Incarcerated Muslims

By M. Abdur Rashid Taylor

I never thought that providing measurements for clothing could mean so much to someone. A few Saturdays ago, at my regular chaplaincy outreach visit to the Toronto Don Jail, one of the Muslim brothers attending our program reminded me that he needed to have his measurements taken so that he could get clothing bought before his trial in a few weeks.

After bargaining with the correctional officers and some major effort, I was able to take the measurements and give these to him. He then told his family or friends, thereby ensuring that he got a proper set of clothes for his trial.

The look of sincere gratitude and appreciation on this brother's face was a sight to be seen. For many of us, taking measurements and getting clothes is an easy thing, but for an incarcerated person, it is a major event. There are prohibitions on any item that might remotely be considered a weapon. A tape measure for example could be a garrote; even belts are generally not allowed for prisoners. Even meeting the schedule for when a change of clothing could be brought into the jail is a hurdle.

But when these obstacles are overcome and the need of an incarcerated Muslim is met, all of the effort is worth it. The quest to find Allah's pleasure by serving His servants is rewarding and heartwarming.

Da`wah in Don Jail

Alhamdulillah, I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve Muslims in the Don Jail for the last two years. It has been an eye opener for me. I have witnessed many people turning their lives around -- from living in the darkness of depravity, violence and drugs to the light and truth of Islam. I have been inspired by men who have found guidance and have held on to tiny strands of Iman, in a place where everyone and everything seems to be against them.

One Saturday, I saw a brother whose religion was listed as Muslim. I greeted him, saying *Assalaamu alaikum*. He looked at me with a blank stare and by this look, I knew that he did not understand what I was saying. I asked him, "Are you Muslim?"

He struggled within himself for a few moments, and replied, "Yes, I am a Muslim." I asked him when he took his Shahadah. He admitted that he did not know what I was talking about, but he was adamant. "I am a Muslim, look! I have been reading this everyday." He took out some sheets of paper from his shirt pocket and showed them to me.

(Continued on page 8)

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(continued from page 1)

(Continued from page 1)

feriority complex that my generation had inherited gradually went as I developed into a world class athlete. Secondly, I had the unique position of living between two cultures I began to see the advantages and the disadvantages of both the societies.

In western societies, institutions were strong while they were collapsing in our country. However, there was an area where we were and still are superior, and that is our family life. I used to notice the loneliness of the old-age pensioners at Hove Cricket ground (during my Sussex years). Imagine sending your parents to Old Peoples' Homes! Even the children there never had the sort of love and warmth that we grew up with here. They completely miss out on the security blanket that a joint family system provides.

Removing God from their Lives

However, I began to realise that the biggest loss to the western society was that in trying to free itself from the oppression of the clergy, they had had removed both God and religion from their lives. While science can answer a lot of questions, no matter how much it progresses, there are two questions it will never be able to answer:

One, what is the purpose of our existence and two, what happens to us when we die? It is this vacuum that I felt created the materialistic and the Hedonistic culture. If this is the only life then one must make hay while the Sun shines and in order to do so one needs money

Such a culture is bound to cause psychological problems in a human being, as there is going to be an imbalance between the body and the soul. Consequently, in the USA, which has shown the greatest materialistic progress and also gives its citizens the greatest human rights, almost 60 per cent of the population consults psychiatrists. Yet, amazingly in modern psychology, there is no study of the human soul. Sweden and Switzerland, which provide the most welfare to their citizens, also have the highest suicide rates. Hence, man is not necessarily content with material well-being he needs something more.

Morality and Religion

Since all morality has its roots in religion, once religion was removed, immorality has progressively escalated since the 70's. The direct impact of it is on the family life. In UK, the divorce rate is 60 per cent, while it is estimated that there are over 35 per cent single mothers. The crime rate is rising in almost all western societies, but the most disturbing fact is the alarming increase in racism

While science always tries to prove the inequality of man -- for example, a recent survey 'showing' the American Black to be genetically less intelligent than whites), it is only religion which preaches the equality of man. Between '91 and '94, it was estimated that total immigration into Europe was around 320,000, and there were racially motivated attacks all over, especially in Britain, France and Germany

In Pakistan during the Afghan war, we had over four million refugees, and despite the people being so much poorer here and in the NWFP, they suffered a considerable loss in their standard of living as a result of the refugees yet, there was no racial tension. No wonder, last year in Britain religious education was reintroduced in their schools

Moving towards God

There was a sequence of events in the 80's that moved me towards God as the Quran says: "There are signs for people of understanding" One of them was cricket. As I was a student of the game, the more I understood the game, the more I began to realise that what I considered to be chance was, in fact, the will of Allah, a pattern which became clearer with time. But it was not until Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* that my understanding of Islam began to develop

People like me who were living in the western world bore the brunt of anti-Islam prejudice that followed the Muslim reaction to the book. We were left with two choices fight or flight. Since I felt strongly that the attacks on Islam were unfair, I decided to fight

It was then I realised that I was not equipped to do so as my knowledge of Islam was inadequate Hence I started my research and for me a period of my greatest enlightenment. I read scholars like Ali Shariati, Mohammad Asad, Iqbal, Gai Eaton, plus of course, a study of the Holy Quran.

I will try to explain as concisely as is possible, what "discovering the truth" meant for me. When the believers are addressed in the Quran, it always says, "Those who believe and do good deeds." In other words, a Muslim has dual function, one towards God and the other towards fellow human beings. .

The greatest impact of believing in God for me was that I lost all fear of human beings. The Quran liberates man from man when it says that life and death and respect and humiliation are God's jurisdiction, so we do not have to bow before other human beings. As Iqbal puts it, *Wo ak Sajda jisay tu giran samajhta hai, hazaar sajdon say deta hai aadmi ko nijaat.* [It is the one prostration that you consider too difficult / That relieves you from thousands of [fake] prostrations' -- MJ]

Moreover, since this is a transitory world where we prepare for the eternal one, I broke out of the self-imposed prisons, such as growing old (such a curse in the western world, as a result of which, plastic surgeons are having a field day), materialism, ego, what people say and so on. It is important to note that one does not eliminate the earthly desires, simply that instead of being controlled by them, one controls them.

Imran Khan, as a Better Person

By following the second part of believing in Islam, I have become a better human being. Rather than being self-centred and living for the self, I feel that because the Almighty gave so much to me, in turn I must use that blessing to help the less privileged.

By following the fundamentals of Islam rather than becoming a Kalashnikov-wielding fanatic, I have become a tolerant and a giving human being who feels compassion for the under privileged. Instead of attributing success to myself, I know it is because of God's will, hence humility instead of arrogance

Also, instead of the snobbish Brown Sahib attitude towards our masses, I believe in egalitarianism and strongly feel against the injustice done to the weak in our society according to the Quran, "Oppression is worse than killing." In fact only now do I understand the true meaning of Islam, if you submit to the will of Allah, you have inner peace

Through my faith, I have discovered strength within me that I never knew existed and that has released my potential in life My education programme that I intend to announce in March 1995 is far more ambitious than the cancer hospital project.

I feel that in Pakistan we have selective Islam Just believing in God and going through the rituals is not enough one also has to be a good human being. I feel there are certain western countries with far more Islamic traits than us, especially in the way they protect the rights of their citizens, or for that matter their justice system. In fact some of the finest individuals I know live there. What I dislike about them is their double-standards in the way they protect the rights of their citizens and yet consider citizens of other countries as being somehow inferior to them as human being, e.g. dumping toxic waste in the Third World, advertising cigarettes that are not allowed in the west and selling drugs that are banned in the west.

Pakistan: Between Two Reactionary Groups

One of the problems facing Pakistan is the polarisation of two reactionary groups On the one side is the westernised group that looks upon Islam through Western eyes and has inadequate knowledge about the subject It reacts to any one trying to impose Islam in the society and wants only a selective part of the religion On the other extreme is the group that reacts to this westernised elite and in trying to become a defender of the faith, takes up such intolerant and self-righteous attitudes that are repugnant to the spirit of Islam.

What needs to be done is to somehow start a dialogue between the two extremes In order for this to happen, the group on whom the greatest proportion of our educational resources are spent in this country must study Islam properly Whether they become practising Muslims or believe in God is entirely a personal choice; as the Quran tells us that there is "no compulsion in religion." However, they must arm themselves with knowledge as a weapon to fight extremism Turning up their noses at extremism is not going to solve the problem

The Quran calls Muslims "the middle nation", i.e. not of extremes The Holy Prophet (PBUH) was told to simply give the message and not worry whether people converted or not, therefore, there is no question in Islam of forcing your opinions on any one else More over, we are told to respect other religions, their places of worship and their prophets

It should be noted that no Muslim missionaries or armies ever went to Malaysia or Indonesia The people converted to Islam due to the high principles and impeccable character of the Muslim traders At the moment, the worst advertisement for Islam are the Muslim countries with their selective Islam, especially where the religion is used to deprive people of their rights In fact, a society that obeys the fundamentals of Islam has to be a liberal one.

Study Islam

If our westernised class started to study Islam, not only will it be able to help our society fight sectarianism and extremism, but it will also make them realise what a progressive religion Islam is. They will also be able to help the western world by articulating Islamic concepts Last year, Prince Charles accepted that the western world can learn from Islam during his speech at the Oxford Union But how can this happen if the group that is in the best position to project Islam gets its attitudes from the west and considers Islam backward? Islam is a universal religion and that is why our Prophet (PBUH) was called a mercy for all mankind

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Terminal Illness

Pitfalls of Muslim Interaction on the Internet

By Syed Nouman Ashraf

I must admit, I was quite puzzled by all this talk around me of Muslim Brotherhood/Sisterhood on the Internet. Although I had used the Internet before, for example importing jokes from the different humor groups and using them on my finance assignments, I was sceptical about it being a viable accessory for "Islamic" interaction between brothers and sisters across the world.

So, I asked my dear Brother Zaraf (whose real name has been altered) who is the epitome of the Internet Muslim Activist subculture on campus if he felt that Cyberspace was the next medium for the emergence of a new breed of Muslim intelligentsia.

Lack of Inhibition

I professed my reservations about the lack of inhibitions that one feels while on the computer terminal. Barring the lab monitor, there really isn't anyone to monitor what exit one takes on the boundless information highway.

I further confessed to him that the problem is that most brothers and sisters log on late at night to check their e-mail. This is when the phone is not busy and, most importantly, it is when they have time to kill.

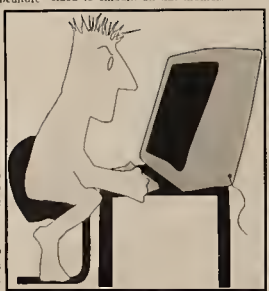
I felt that this problem could get even more acute when brothers and sisters log on to different "multi-user chat groups" (excuse my computer illiteracy) and talked about different issues and topics - some of which are very useful I'm sure and others not.

My problem was, and this may be termed a personal bias, why would brothers and sisters waste their time socialising on the Internet, when they have better things to pursue in their quest for a truly Islamic identity.

My problem was not so much intra-gender socialisation, as it was inter-gender kind. I told him that I really believed that such a forum would be an ideal medium for transmission of Islamic knowledge and information. However, I felt that the socialisation function was best divorced from it.

A Trip to the Islamic Metropolis

Brother Zaraf, in his unmatchably charming style, tried to convince me that my fears and reservations were unjustified. However, I retained my doubts and made up my mind that the only way to resolve our differences was by a trip to the Islamic metropolis on the Internet. So, brother Zaraf, brother Labqi (my ally in the discussion) and I decided to embark on this momentous journey at two o'clock in the morning.



No, this is not Nouman (though....)

What followed was an interesting experience, the details of which I will leave out, to avoid embarrassing brother Zaraf and his other proponent buddies. But seriously, I remain much more resolute in my belief that the Internet is not the most conducive avenue for Islamic interaction between brothers and sisters. I believe that if we are to put so much time and effort into interacting with one another on the Internet, the results have to be equally rewarding.

To me, any such reciprocal relationship is far from present. I believe that if we cannot solve, or at least attempt to solve, our problems on the local level then, any talk of this giant, united Muslim effort to alleviate the concerns of the Ummah is just hot air.

For, Islam has always progressed from a core of a committed few individuals who strive to struggle together in a concerted effort to aid each other towards righteousness and truth, not only through words, but through actions.

They prayed together, fasted together, travelled together, fought together, experienced joy together and shared grief together, in a day to day sense that kept their ties of brotherhood strongly tied.

I do not wish to be misunderstood. I believe that Muslims should use every medium to propagate knowledge and to spread the truth.

However, we should not use new technology into deceiving ourselves into doing things that we know to be against Islamic normative behaviour.

In the end, everyone has to account for their individual actions to Allah, Glorified be He. However, to be deluded into believing that we can forge a true Islamic brotherhood on the Internet and use the Internet as a license to interact with Muslims of the other gender without any reservations is not giving ourselves enough credit.

On a personal level, it really upsets me when I see certain brothers checking their e-mail with more regularity than their *Salah*.

I am sure that the brothers are not intentionally neglectful, and my sincere advice to them is to question their priorities and to realign them with those that our Prophet, may Allah shower him with His mercy, left us with.

I ask Allah to guide us all, for verily without His guidance we are all lost. Ameen.

Syed Nouman Ashraf is a fourth year Commerce & Economics student at the University of Toronto. He is considering taking "Celtic Studies" at St. Mike's.

Prison Dawah in Toronto

(Continued from page 6)

What was written were Sura Fatiha and Sura Ya Sin in ENGLISH. This was the brother's proof that he was Muslim and it was his ibadat *Alhamdulillah*, this brother said his Shahadah after Islam was explained to him. Incidentally, three more men accepted Islam that same day in the same prison. There are many more stories like this one, but this brother's story touched me. He knew that he was Muslim, even if he did not know the theology and the requirements of being a Muslim. There are many more brothers like him, just waiting for the message of proper Islam to reach them.

Not only are people accepting Islam in jail, but some Muslims who have not been practicing Islam and have ended up in jail also found their way back to Islam.

In my two years of outreach at prisons in Toronto, I have seen only three repeat offenders out of scores of brothers that I have been in contact with. Alhamdulillah, because a program like this exists, Muslims are reminded of their duty to Allah (swt) and are making conscious positive changes in their lives.

The Needs in Prison

The program that I am directing tries to meet the basic needs of Muslims in jail. It takes care of their religious needs by providing Qur'ans, books, education and serves as a meeting place for all of the Muslims in the facilities.

It also shows them that there is a larger community out there that cares for them. Their emotional needs are also being met with this type of program. The need for family, love and acceptance, that could never be found in a prison are fulfilled because of this program.

We are doing a good job of helping the brothers that we encounter, but unfortunately, we only reach a small portion of Muslims. Currently, we only reach Muslims in two Toronto-area jails. Our goal is to expand and ensure that there are services available to Muslim inmates, wherever they are, in-sha'Allah.

Right now, we are trying to find brothers and sisters who are willing to assist in this outreach. We need volunteers who could help in many capacities: people who could go into jails and run programs, people who could donate books, materials and money for our programs; people who could assist the families of these Muslims.

We also need people who could give time and help us in our efforts, and people who could assist in whatever possible capacity.

These Muslims in jail really appreciate the help, care and concern that is offered to them by the community. If you feel that you could help, please do so by contacting us or sending any contribution to:

MUSLIM INMATE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM,
c/o Jami Mosque, 56 Boultbee Ave., Toronto, Ont. M6R 1Y9.

Brother M. Abdur Rashid Taylor is Director of the Muslim Inmate Assistance Program at the Jami Mosque. In-sha'Allah, he will be Canada's first accredited Muslim Chaplain.

Popeye's still serving Halal food

In a recent announcement, Popeye's Chicken, known in Toronto for serving Halal meat for many years, re-confirmed that all four outlets are still serving Halal meat.

Although ownership has recently changed, the new owner has pledged that Halal meat will still be served. Amir Durani, Manager of the downtown franchise, has been dispelling rumours that the famous chicken chain is no longer serving Halal meat.

Mr. Durani has also offered an open invitation to anyone interested in inspecting the store, or visiting the meat supplier, L and V Poultry in Beamsville, Ontario. Please call Popeye's for details.

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